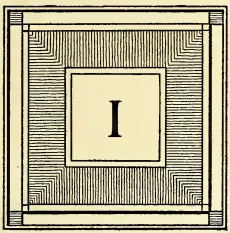
M 1622

Abraham Lincoln

Written for the Lincoln Farm Association

By THEODORE ROOSEVELT



I AM GLAD THAT the effort is to be made to celebrate in appropriate fashion the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. Excepting only Washington, Lincoln's figure stands foremost in all our history. It is an excellent thing for a nation to study the history of its great deeds in the past and commemorate the lives of the great men who did them; provided only that this duty is undertaken with the earnest desire to profit thereby, so that the men of the present generation may render service worthy of the generations that are past. Each generation has its own peculiar work to do, its own peculiar issues to face. Nevertheless, the underlying qualities which enable men to face these ever-varying issues must ever remain themselves the same, and therefore the live issues of the present can be faced to better advantage by men who have in good faith studied how the one-time leaders of the Nation faced the dead issues of the past. All upright citizens should study with peculiar care Lincoln's life. Like Washington's, the keynote of Lincoln's career was disinterested devotion to the welfare of the country, combined with a rugged and healthy quality of mind which made it as impossible for him to be inefficient as to be false to his ideals. There are many men who have made great marks in history by wrong-doing, by spending their lives primarily for their own advancement. But this man both lived and died that the Nation might grow steadily greater and better, and the only reward he accepted was that which came in the shape of the chance to render service

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to his fellow countrymen. LINCOLN saved the Union, and yet at the same time lifted higher than ever before the cause of liberty. The fundamental difference between the careers of our two great national heroes and those of almost any other men of equal note in the world's history is shown by the fact that when we think of our two great men we think inevitably not of glory, but of duty, not of what the man did for himself in achieving name or fame or position, but of what he did for his fellows. LINCOLN, like WASHINGTON, had the right ideal and also lived up to it in practical fashion. No more blessed thing could have happened to a great democratic republic like ours than to have had this man of the plain people, this rail-splitter, this country lawyer, develop into its hero and savior; for every feature of his career can be studied as a lesson by each of us, whatever his station, as we lead our several lives. LINCOLN was a shrewd and enlightened man of the world, and he had all the practical qualities necessary for a man who was to guide such men as his countrymen were and are; and yet he was also a genius of the heroic type, a leader who rose level to the greatest crisis through which this Nation or any other nation had to pass in the nineteenth century. All of us throughout this country, Northerners and Southerners, Easterners and Westerners, now look back to the men who, with high valor and stern devotion to duty, fought each for the right as it was given to him to see the right, whether he wore the blue or whether he wore the gray. The heroes of each side in the great struggle of the four dark years are now the heroes of the whole Nation, and so the whole Nation can fittingly join in celebrating the hundredth birthday of the man to whom, more than to any other, we owe it that we are a Nation at all.

Theodore Roosevelt

The White House
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